

Message Text

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47

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-01 TRSE-00 XMB-02

OPIC-03 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 EUR-12 IO-10

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P R 202032Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6247

INFO AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 11206

E O 11652 NA

TAGS PINT CO PORG UN

SUBJ: PRES LOPEZ ADDRESSES CLOSING SESSION OF CONGRESS

1. SUMMARY: THE COLOMBIAN CONGRESS ENDED ITS SOMEWHAT DESULTORY 1974 LEGISLATIVE SESSION WITH A WEEK LONG BURST OF ACTIVITY, ON THE FINAL DAY OF WHICH SOME 40 BILLS WERE PASSED. PRES LOPEZ SPOKE TO THE CLOSING SESSION OF CONGRESS IN A SPEECH WIDELY PRAISED FOR ITS FRANKNESS IN ADDRESSING THE POLIT AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS WHICH CONFRONT THE GOVT. END SUMMARY

2. AT THE END OF A LACKLUSTER CONGRESSIONAL SESSION WHICH HAS BEEN WIDELY CRITICIZED IN POLIT CIRCLES AND THE PRESS FOR INACTION AND FAILURE TO WORK AS A TEAM WITH THE LOPEZ ADMIN, COLOMBIA'S CONGRESS MOVED WITH UNUSUAL ALACRITY TO APPROVE SOME FORTY DRAFT BILLS INCLUDING ALMOST ALL OF THE LEGISLATION TO WHICH THE ADMIN HAD ASSIGNED TOP PRIORITY. THE CONGRESS TOOK NO ACTION REGARDING THE SERIES OF REFORMS DECREED BY THE PRES DURING THE EMERGENCY PERIOD, THUS GIVING ITS TACIT APPROVAL OF THE MEASURES. THE ONLY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MAJOR BILL NOT PASSED, THE REFORM OF THE OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER,

WAS BURIED DURING THIS SESSION DESPITE THE ADMIN'S INSISTENCE THAT THE PRESENT STRUCTURE IS A PRINCIPAL CAUSE OF FISCAL DIFFICULTIES AND AN ADMINISTRATION-SUPPORTED PRESS CAMPAIGN INDICATING EXTENSIVE CORRUPTION IN THE COMPTROLLER'S OFFICE. SEN GERMAN ZEA TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT THE BILL'S NONPASSAGE WAS DUE PRIMARILY TO POOR MANAGEMENT IN THE LOWER HOUSE AND THAT IT WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE PASSED EARLY IN THE NEXT SESSION.

3. CHIEF AMONG THE MEASURES APPROVED BY THE CONGRESS WERE BILLS WHICH:

A) GRANTED SPECIAL POWERS TO THE PRES TO REISSUE BY DECREE THE TAX REGS AND PROCEDURES WHICH WERE ORIGINALLY ISSUED DURING THE PERIOD OF ECONOMIC EMERGENCY BUT DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL BY THE SUPREME COURT. THE CONGRESS DILUTED SOMEWHAT THE ORIGINAL TEXT BY PROVIDING FOR TAX AMNESTIES AND GREATER APPEAL FACILITIES BUT THESE WILL NOT SIGNIFICANTLY WEAKEN THE NEW TAX MEASURES;

B) GAVE FINAL CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL TO THE 73 CONCORDAT BETWEEN COLOMBIA AND THE VATICAN, WHICH REGULATES THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE STATE AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN COLOMBIA;

C) INCREASED CONGRESSIONAL SALARIES FROM 20,000 PESOS PER MONTH TO 30,000. THE DETERMINATION OF THE CONGRESS TO PUSH THIS MEASURE THROUGH DESPITE A GOVT POLICY OF AUSTERITY AND GENERALLY WORSENING SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS HAS PRODUCED HARSH CRITICISM IN MOST OF THE PRESS AND MUCH UNFAVORABLE PRIVATE REACTION. A FAVORABLE VOTE FOR THE MEASURE BY UNO SENATOR HERNANDO ECHVERRI CAUSED HIS EXPULSION FROM THE LEFTIST POLIT COALITION WHICH HAD SUPPORTED HIM AS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE IN THE 74 ELECTION (BOGOTA 11174);

D) RATIFIED A COLOMBIAN-ROMANIAN TREATY FOR CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC EXCHANGE;

E) PROVIDE FOR LOWERING THE VOTING AGE TO 18 YEARS. AS THIS MEASURE INVOLVES A CHANGE IN THE CONSTITUTION IT WILL HAVE TO BE APPROVED BY THE NEXT SESSION OF CONGRESS TO BECOME EFFECTIVE;

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F) RAISED THE LEGAL CEILING FOR OFFICIAL FOREIGN BORROWING BY ONE BILLION DOLLARS. A NUMBER OF DECENTRALIZED AGENCY PROJECTS HAD BEEN HELD UP PENDING THIS AUTHORIZATION.

G) EMPOWERED THE GOVT TO MODIFY THE CIVIL CODE TO PROVIDE EQUAL RIGHTS TO WOMEN.

#) GRANTED POWERS TO THE PRES TO UNDERTAKE A REFORM OF THE PUBLIC

ADMIN.

4. THE PRES HAS ALREADY SIGNED THE MEASURES ON TAX AMNESTY, THE CONCORDAT, CONGRESSIONAL SALARIES, THE 18 YEAR OLD VOTE AND THE COLOMBIAN-ROMANIAN TREATY. HE ALSO ADDRESSED THE CLOSING SESSION OF BOTH HOUSES ON DEC 16, THUS REVIVING A TRADITION WHICH HAD FALLEN INTO DISUSE IN RECENT YEARS. THE SPEECH, WHICH WAS TELEVISED, HAS BEEN WIDELY PRAISED IN POLIT CIRCLES AS AN EXCEPTIONALLY FRANK AND ACUTE ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS FACING COLOMBIA AND THE LOPEZ ADMIN.

5. MOST OF LOPEZ'S SPEECH WAS DEVOTED TO AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLES OF VARIOUS KINDS OF OPPOSITION, ALL OF WHICH WERE LEGITIMATE IF EXERCISED WITHIN THE LAW. HE DISCUSSED THE EXTRALEGAL OPPOSITION AND PRESSURES WHICH HAD BEEN DIRECTED AGAINST THE GOVT BY GROUPS WHICH EXPLOITED FOR THEIR OWN ENDS WHAT HE RECOGNIZED TO BE THE LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES OF MANY COLOMBIANS, CAUSED BY INFLATION AND THE THREAT OF UNEMPLOYMENT. THESE ILLEGITIMATE PRESSURES AND OPPOSITION INCLUDED ACTUAL OR THREATENED CIVIL STRIKES, RIOTS AND THE DESTRUCTION OF PROPERTY, THE CESSATION OF SERVICES BY PROVINCIAL OR CITY ADMINISTRATIONS, UNIVERSITIES AND OTHER PUBLIC AGENCIES TO FORCE SUBSIDIES OR CONCESSIONS FROM THE GOVT (BOGOTA 10996).

6. LOPEZ POINTED OUT THAT ALTHOUGH HE DID NOT BELIEVE THAT "POPULAR ASPIRATION SHOULD BE DROWNED BY REPRESSION" HE HAD NO ILLUSIONS REGARDING "A PROCESS OF DETERIORATION TOO WELL KNOWN (IN THE HISTORY OF) LATIN-AMERICAN DEMOCRACY (AND) THAT THERE EXISTS A POLIT STRATEGY DESIGNED TO DISCREDIT GOVTS OF THE LEFT WITH THE AIM OF OPENING THE WAY TO REACTION, IN ORDER TO EXACERBATE ... THE INTENSITY OF SOCIAL CONFLICTS." LOPEZ ASKED RHETORICALLY IF PERHAPS SUCH AN "EXPERIMENT" WAS NOT BEING ATTEMPTED AGAINST HIS GOVT.

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7. LOPEZ PICTURED HUMANITY AS APPROACHING "WHAT COULD BE CALLED THE AGE OF TERROR, WHEN THE USE OF VIOLENCE AS AN ARM OF PERSUASION TAKES CHARGE IN SUCH PLACES AS THE UNITED NATIONS UNFORTUNATELY, THE CIVILIZED STATES ... PROVE THEMSELVES PUSILLANIMOUS BEFORE THIS MENACE. THE FORCES OF THE LEFT, WHICH SHOULD DISTINGUISH THEMSELVES BY THEIR HUMANISTIC CONTENT ... SEEM TO HAVE BECOME THE HEIRS OF STALINIST PRACTICES OF TERROR." LOPEZ SAID THESE PRACTICES SHOULD BE "UNMASKED" AND "REPUDIATED" "WE WILL FIND MANY ALLIES ALONG THE WAY."

8. THE PRES ALSO CALLED ON THE LIBERAL PARTY FOR GREATER UNITY AND DISCIPLINE IN SUPPORT OF THE GOVT'S PROGRAMS. HE REMINDED HIS LISTENERS THAT CAMPAIGN PROMISES OBLIGATED NOT ONLY THE PRINCIPAL CANDIDATE BUT ALSO ALL THOSE WHO SHARED HIS PLATFORM AND

WHO BENEFITTED FROM THE VOTE. "A PARTY IS NOT ONLY A MACHINE FOR WINNING ELECTIONS." LOPEZ CITED THE U S AND GREAT BRITAIN AS EXAMPLES OF COUNTRIES WHICH PRACTICE PARTY SOLIDARITY IN THEIR LEGISLATURES, WITHOUT THIS BEING "AN INDICATION OF SERVILITY."

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-01 TRSE-00 XMB-02

OPIC-03 CIEP-01 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 EUR-12 IO-10

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P R 202032Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6264

INFO AMCONSUL CALI

AMCONSUL MEDELLIN

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 2 OF 2 BOGOTA 11206

E O 11652 NA

TAGS PINT CO PORG UN

SUBJ: PRES LOPEZ ADDRESSES CLOSING SESSION OF CONGRESS

9. LOPEZ REVIEWED WITH SATISFACTION A NUMBER OF MEASURES WHICH HAD BEEN APPROVED "THANKS TO THE CONGRESS" THAT PREVIOUS ADMINISTRATIONS HAD FAILED TO ACCOMPLISH, CHIEFLY THE CONCORDAT AND THE 18 YEAR OLD VOTE. HIS SATISFACTION WAS LESS THAN TOTAL BECAUSE OF "THE PROBLEM WHICH MOST AFFECTS THE COLOMBIAN PEOPLE, THE HIGH COST OF LIVING" AND, HE CONTINUED, "NOTHING IS SO EXPLOSIVE IN THE PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES AS AN INCREASE IN UNEMPLOYMENT." THE GOVT, HE SAID, WAS IN THE PROCESS OF ATTEMPTING TO RESOLVE THESE PROBLEMS. "...THIS TASK COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED IN A MORE ORDERLY AND SYSTEMATIC MANNER WITH A MINIMUM OF SOCIAL DISCIPLINE TO WHICH, UNFORTUNATELY, THE NATION IS NOT ACCUSTOMED."

10. LOPEZ CLOSED HIS SPEECH WITH WARM PRAISE FOR THE COOPERATION OF THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY IN THE GOVT AND CONGRESS.

11. LIBERAL AND CONSERVATIVE CONGRESSMEN OF VARIOUS FACTIONS,
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CONTACTED BY EMBOFFS, WARMLY PRAISED THE SPEECH FOR ITS FRANK, HONEST AND ACUTE ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEMS WHICH FACE THE ADMIN AND THE COUNTRY.

12. COMMENT: DURING ITS FINAL FLURRY OF ACTIVITY THE CONGRESS DID MUCH TO REDEEM ITS RECORD OF POOR PERFORMANCE DURING MOST OF THE 74 SESSION AND PROVIDED THE ADMIN WITH THE LEGISLATION IT REQUIRED. THE SPEED AND ABSENCE OF OPPOSITION OR EVEN DISCUSSION WITH WHICH THE MEASURES WERE PASSED ARE EVIDENCE OF A LACK OF SIGNIFICANT OPPOSITION VERGING ON DOCILITY IN THE CONGRESS TO LOPEZ AND HIS PROGRAMS. CONGRESS'S PROBLEM SEEMS TO BE A LACK OF POLITICAL DIRECTION AND LEADERSHIP, A DIRECT RESULT OF LOPEZ'S ESCHEWING OF THE ROLE OF CHIEF OF THE LIBERAL PARTY. LOPEZ'S STATEMENTS AFTER HIS ELECTION TO THE EFFECT THAT AS PRES HE WOULD NOT BE PARTY BOSS WERE GREETED WITH CONSIDERABLE SKEPTICISM, BUT IT HAS BEEN CLEAR FOR SOME TIME THAT HE MEANT WHAT HE SAID. PRESIDENTIAL DESIGNADO AND SENATE PRES TURBAY HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO ASSUME THE ROLE OF PARTY LEADER, AT LEAST PARTLY BECAUSE AS FRONT RUNNER FOR THE 78 NOMINATION HE IS VIEWED WITH SUSPICION BY POTENTIAL RIVALS.

THE LIBERAL NATIONAL DIRECTORATE (DLN) REMAINS A NONFUNCTIONING BODY AS 3 OF ITS 8 MEMBERS CONTINUE NOT TO RECOGNIZE DLN PRES ZEA. FURTHERMORE PRES LOPEZ'S RESORT TO EMERGENCY POWERS CAST THE LIBERAL MAJORITY IN CONGRESS IN THE ROLE OF PASSIVE ONLOOKERS, WHO AS A RESULT FELT LITTLE COMMITMENT TO MUCH OF THE ADMIN'S PROGRAM. LIBERAL PARTY LEADERS ARE HOPEFUL THAT A PARTY CONVENTION, CALLED FOR FEB 1, WILL RESOLVE THE DLN PROBLEM AND WILL MOBILIZE THE PARTY BEHIND THE PRES.

13. LOPEZ'S SPEECH TO CONGRESS MARKS THE FIRST CLEAR PUBLIC RECOGNITION BY THE PRES OF THE ARRAY OF PROBLEMS WHICH BESET HIM IN THE ECONOMY, IN THE STREETS, AND IN HIS PARTY. HIS ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF REAL AND LEGITIMATE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DISCONTENT AS AN UNDERLYING CAUSE OF RECENT UNREST AND DISORDER IS A SIGNIFICANT CHANGE FROM PREVIOUS GOVT STATEMENTS INDICATING THAT SUCH DISORDERS WERE DUE SOLELY TO "SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS." THE CONTENT AND FIRM TONE OF THE ADDRESS MADE CLEAR THAT THE ADMIN WAS ATTEMPTING TO DEAL WITH URGENT SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PROBLEMS BUT THAT IT WOULD NOT GIVE WAY TO COERCION OR VIOLENCE. THAT SUCH A COURSE WILL BE DIFFICULT TO FOLLOW WAS HIGHLIGHTED BY THE RECENT ANNOUNCE-
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MENT THAT THE INCREASE IN BUS FARES IN PASTO, THE SCENE OF RECENT
DISORDERS, HAD BEEN TEMPORARILY RESCINDED, REPORTEDLY AT THE
SUGGESTION OF THE GOVERNOR OF NARINO, SINCE STONING OF THE BUSES
BY DEMONSTRATORS HAD CAUSED A PARTIAL PARALYSIS IN BUS SERVICE.
VAKY

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